

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

(Caption of Case)

Application of Alpine Utilities, Inc. for an
adjustment of rates and charges for the provision
of sewer service and establishment of additional
rates and charges.

BEFORE THE
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

COVER SHEET

DOCKET
NUMBER: 2008 - 190 - S

(Please type or print)

Submitted by: Benjamin P. Mustian

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NOTE: The cover sheet and information contained herein neither replaces nor supplements the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law. This form is required for use by the Public Service Commission of South Carolina for the purpose of docketing and must be filled out completely.

DOCKETING INFORMATION (Check all that apply)

☐ Emergency Relief demanded in petition☐ Request for item to be placed on Commission's Agenda expeditiously☒ Other: _____

INDUSTRY (Check one)	NATURE OF ACTION (Check all that apply)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric	<input type="checkbox"/> Affidavit	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> Request
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric/Gas	<input type="checkbox"/> Agreement	<input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for Certification
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric/Telecommunications	<input type="checkbox"/> Answer	<input type="checkbox"/> Motion	<input type="checkbox"/> Request for Investigation
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric/Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Appellate Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Objection	<input type="checkbox"/> Resale Agreement
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric/Water/Telecom.	<input type="checkbox"/> Application	<input type="checkbox"/> Petition	<input type="checkbox"/> Resale Amendment
<input type="checkbox"/> Electric/Water/Sewer	<input type="checkbox"/> Brief	<input type="checkbox"/> Petition for Reconsideration	<input type="checkbox"/> Reservation Letter
<input type="checkbox"/> Gas	<input type="checkbox"/> Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/> Petition for Rulemaking	<input type="checkbox"/> Response
<input type="checkbox"/> Railroad	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments	<input type="checkbox"/> Petition for Rule to Show Cause	<input type="checkbox"/> Response to Discovery
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sewer	<input type="checkbox"/> Complaint	<input type="checkbox"/> Petition to Intervene	<input type="checkbox"/> Return to Petition
<input type="checkbox"/> Telecommunications	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Order	<input type="checkbox"/> Petition to Intervene Out of Time	<input type="checkbox"/> Stipulation
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Discovery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prefiled Testimony	<input type="checkbox"/> Subpoena
<input type="checkbox"/> Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Exhibit	<input type="checkbox"/> Promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Tariff
<input type="checkbox"/> Water/Sewer	<input type="checkbox"/> Expedited Consideration	<input type="checkbox"/> Proposed Order	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matter	<input type="checkbox"/> Interconnection Agreement	<input type="checkbox"/> Protest	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Interconnection Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Publisher's Affidavit	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Late-Filed Exhibit	<input type="checkbox"/> Report	

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OK D. Duke

WILLOUGHBY & HOEFER, P.A.

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TRACEY C. GREEN
SPECIAL COUNSEL

August 7, 2008

VIA HAND-DELIVERY

The Honorable Charles L.A. Terreni
Chief Clerk/Administrator
Public Service Commission of South Carolina
101 Executive Center Drive
Columbia, South Carolina 29210

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PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMISSION

RE: Application of Alpine Utilities, Inc. for Adjustment of Rates and Charges for the Provision of Sewer Service and Establishment of Additional Rates and Charges; Docket No. 2008-190-S

Dear Mr. Terreni:

Enclosed for filing on behalf of Alpine Utilities, Inc. are the original and twenty-five (25) copies of the Direct Testimony of Robin Dial and Donald H. Burkett in the above-referenced matter. By copy of this letter, I am serving a copy of these documents upon the parties of record to this proceeding and enclose a Certificate of Service to that effect.

I would appreciate your acknowledging receipt of this Testimony by date-stamping the extra copy that is enclosed and returning the same to me via our courier.

If you have any questions, or if you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

WILLOUGHBY & HOEFER, P.A.



Benjamin P. Mustian

The Honorable Charles L.A. Terreni

August 7, 2008

Page 2

BPM/cf

Enclosures

cc: Nanette S. Edwards, Esquire (via first class mail)
Richard L. Whitt, Jr., Esquire (via first class mail)

BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
DOCKET NO. 2008-190-S

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COMMISSION
SOUTH CAROLINA

IN RE:)
)
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for adjustment of rates and charges)
for the provision of sewer service and)
establishment of additional rates and)
charges.)
_____)

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF
ROBIN DIAL

1 **Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS.**

2 A. My name is Robin Dial. My business address is 2712 Middleburg Drive, #208,
3 Columbia, South Carolina 29204-2415.

5 **Q. WHERE ARE YOU EMPLOYED AND IN WHAT CAPACITY?**

6 A. I am currently employed as the President and General Manager of the Applicant,
7 Alpine Utilities, Inc. ("Alpine" or "the Company"). I have been employed in this
8 position since 2007.

10 **Q. WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND WORK EXPERIENCE**
11 **WITH ALPINE?**

12 A. I graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1967 and,
13 subsequently, conducted graduate work in Real Estate and Urban Land studies at the

1 University of Florida. In 1968, I began work with the McTeer Real Estate Company,
2 which became Edens & McTeer, which is now known as Edens & Avant, where I was
3 Vice-President of Development for many years. In 1985, I left to start the real estate firm
4 of Dial, Dunlap, McCracken & Smith which has become Dial, Dunlap & Edwards.

5 I began my employment with Alpine in 1987 as Vice-President of the Company
6 where I assisted my father, J. Donald Dial, Sr., on various matters as needed including
7 vendor and contractor relations, lender negotiations and overseeing and managing plant
8 operations. In 1999, I became the President of Alpine with J. Donald Dial, Sr. serving as
9 General Manager. Beginning in August 2007, my father experienced severe ill health
10 and on November 16, 2007, he passed away. I assumed my father's responsibilities as
11 General Manager as well as being President of the Company and assumed full
12 responsibility for all duties which included the handling of regulatory and other
13 governmental matters, making Company banking and financial decisions, supervising
14 customer issues, and managing personnel matters. Additionally, I have since taken on
15 other duties and responsibilities, including developing system inspection procedures and
16 control program requirements; and overseeing and researching design and cost control
17 issues relating to plant maintenance, operation and upgrades.

18
19 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY IN THIS PROCEEDING?**

20 A. The purpose of my testimony is to sponsor the Company's application for an
21 adjustment of certain rates and charges for the provision of sewer services. Also, I will
22 be providing the Commission with an overview of the Company and its operations,
23 including the area in which it is authorized to provide service, an outline of the history of

1 the utility, a review of its performance from an operational standpoint, a description of
2 the facilities used and useful to the Company and some of the expenses incurred in
3 providing sewer service, and an explanation of the Company's need for rate relief.
4

5 **Q. WHICH AREAS ARE CURRENTLY SERVED BY ALPINE?**

6 A. Presently, Alpine provides wastewater collection and treatment services in its
7 authorized service area in Richland and Lexington Counties, South Carolina to
8 approximately eight hundred eighty two (882) residential customers. Additionally, the
9 Company serves approximately one hundred thirty four (134) apartment customers, with
10 a total of approximately 4,692 apartment units, and approximately two hundred forty
11 three (243) commercial customers.
12

13 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE PLANT AND FACILITIES WHICH COMPRISE THE**
14 **SEWER SYSTEMS IN THE SERVICE AREA?**

15 A. The sewerage system consists of collection and transportation lines, lift stations,
16 and the Stoop Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, which is an aerated lagoon system with
17 a permitted capacity of 2.0 million gallons per day. After treatment, the wastewater is
18 chlorinated in a chlorine contact chamber. Following de-chlorination, the effluent is
19 disposed of by authorized discharge into Stoop Creek.
20

21 **Q. IS THE COMPANY PROVIDING WASTEWATER TREATMENT SERVICE TO**
22 **ITS CUSTOMERS IN CONFORMITY WITH ITS PERMIT FROM THE SOUTH**

1 **CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL**
2 **CONTROL ("DHEC")?**

3 A. Yes. As the letter attached to the Application as Exhibit "C" reflects, the
4 Company holds all necessary permits to operate the facilities. During the test year, the
5 Utility was not cited by DHEC for any major infractions and did not incur any fines. The
6 Utility is committed to operating in an environmentally responsible manner, which is a
7 costly undertaking.

8
9 **Q. WHEN WAS A GENERAL RATE INCREASE LAST REQUESTED BY THE**
10 **COMPANY?**

11 A. The Company last filed an application for a general rate increase on April 6, 1988.
12 By Order No. 88-1002, dated September 28, 1988, in Docket No. 88-56-S, the
13 Commission granted the Company rate relief and the increased rates became effective on
14 September 28, 1988.

15
16 **Q. WHY IS ALPINE REQUESTING RATE RELIEF AT THIS TIME?**

17 A. For the test year ended December 31, 2007, Alpine earned on a per book basis a
18 (4.02%) operating margin (loss) and experienced a net loss of (\$51,620). Without rate
19 relief, Alpine will become unable to meet its financial obligations. Such a scenario places
20 in jeopardy the Company's ability to continue to provide safe, reliable and efficient sewer
21 utility services to its customers.

1 **Q. WHAT HAS THE COMPANY'S EXPERIENCE BEEN WITH THE COSTS OF**
2 **OPERATION SINCE ITS LAST RATE INCREASE?**

3 A. It has been almost twenty (20) years since the Company's last rate increase and,
4 in that time, the Company's expenses have increased across the board. The Company has
5 incurred increased operational expenses such as purchased power, sludge disposal,
6 employee salaries, chemicals and the like. Other expenses, such as taxes, license fees and
7 assessments have also risen. Additionally, the financial statements and the testimony of
8 Mr. Donny Burkett clearly reflect that we are operating at a financial loss.

9
10 **Q. WHAT IS A RATE INCREASE DESIGNED TO ACCOMPLISH FOR THE**
11 **COMPANY?**

12 A. An increase in Alpine's current rates would generate additional revenues that will
13 allow the Company to move closer to being on a sound financial footing, to allow it to
14 raise additional capital and to increase its earnings to a more reasonable level.
15 Additionally, as the Commission is aware from its regulation of the Company, Alpine has
16 been providing safe and reliable wastewater service to its customers for over thirty five
17 (35) years. As the plant and its facilities age, the need for significant upgrades and
18 improvements becomes more vital to the continued operation of the Company. The
19 increased revenue will allow the Company to secure the necessary capital to make the
20 necessary upgrades and repairs and continue its long history of operating the system in
21 compliance with regulatory requirements.

1 **Q. ARE THE RATES AND CHARGES PROPOSED FAIR, REASONABLE, AND**
2 **NECESSARY IN ORDER FOR THE COMPANY TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE**
3 **A SAFE AND RELIABLE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SERVICE?**

4 A. Yes. The financial statements and the testimony of Mr. Burkett clearly reflect
5 that we are operating at a financial loss. In order to continue to provide the type of
6 services which we have been providing, the Company must have rate relief. The
7 Company believes that the proposed rates fairly distribute the cost to the consumer of
8 providing those services, while at the same time placing the utility on a more solid
9 financial footing. It is our belief that the rates requested are reasonable, fair, responsible,
10 non-discriminatory and justified in light of the customer needs, the Company's
11 requirements to meet the customers' needs, and the Company's obligation to do so in
12 compliance with regulations of this Commission, DHEC, and other regulatory agencies
13 with jurisdiction over the Company.

15 **Q. PLEASE EXPLAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALPINE AND**
16 **WOODLAND UTILITIES, INC.**

17 A. Woodland Utilities, Inc. ("Woodland") is a separate public utility operating in
18 certain areas of Lexington County and is regulated by the Commission. As with Alpine, I
19 currently serve as President and General Manager of Woodland. In order to operate more
20 efficiently, Alpine and Woodland share certain costs including salaries and office
21 expenses.

1 **Q. HAS THE COMMISSION APPROVED ALLOCATION OF THESE SHARED**
2 **EXPENSES BETWEEN ALPINE AND WOODLAND PREVIOUSLY?**

3 A. Yes, it has. In its previous rate case for Alpine, and as ordered in its Order No.
4 88-1002, the Commission approved an allocation of these expenses in the amount of 84%
5 to Alpine and 16% to Woodland based upon the number of combined customer units. By
6 way of its Order No. 91-1023, dated November 20, 1991, in Docket No. 91-237-S, the
7 Commission modified this ratio to 86%/14% in connection with a rate application filed
8 by Woodland. The Commission continued its recognition of these shared expenses as
9 evidenced by the Commission's approval of Woodland's most recent rate application in
10 Order No. 2007-473, dated August 8, 2007, in Docket No. 2007-61-S. Neither Alpine nor
11 Woodland has experienced any significant customer growth since the last rate case
12 proceeding in which the Commission addressed this issue. Therefore, the Company
13 would propose to use the same allocation method and percentages to apportion those
14 shared expenses in this proceeding as well.

15
16 **Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY?**

17 A. Yes, it does.

BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
DOCKET NO. 2008-190-S

SOUTH CAROLINA
PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMISSION

2008 AUG - 7 PM 2:55

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IN RE:)
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establishment of additional rates and)
charges.)
_____)

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF
DONALD H. BURKETT

1
2 **Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND BUSINESS ADDRESS.**

3 A. My name is Donald H. Burkett. My business address is 3101 Sunset Boulevard,
4 P.O. Box 2044, West Columbia, SC 29171.
5

6 **Q. WHERE ARE YOU EMPLOYED AND IN WHAT CAPACITY?**

7 A. I am a Certified Public Accountant with the firm of Burkett Burkett & Burkett,
8 Certified Public Accountants, P.A. where I currently serve as President.
9

10 **Q. WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND YOUR WORK**
11 **EXPERIENCE?**

12 A. I graduated from the University of South Carolina in 1974 with Bachelor of
13 Science Degree in Accounting. From 1974 to 1976, I was a Staff Accountant with
14 Cherry, Bekaert & Holland CPAs, a regional CPA firm in Florence, SC. In 1976, I
15 founded the firm of Burkett, Burkett, & Burkett, Certified Public Accountants, P.A.

1 **Q. ARE YOU CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF ANY PROFESSIONAL**
2 **ASSOCIATIONS?**

3 A. I am a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. I have
4 also previously served as the President of the South Carolina Association of Certified
5 Public Accountants and the Central Chapter of Certified Public Accountants.

6
7 **Q. DO YOU SERVE ON ANY STATE BOARDS OR COMMISSIONS?**

8 A. Yes. I am currently the chairman of the South Carolina Board of Accountancy,
9 which, among other things, is charged with the licensing and discipline of certified public
10 accountants.

11
12 **Q. WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES WITH RESPECT TO ALPINE**
13 **UTILITIES, INC.?**

14 A. My responsibilities include advising the Company as to various financial and tax
15 matters and preparing tax returns and financial statements. I have been providing these
16 services to Alpine for approximately twenty-five (25) years.

17
18 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY IN THIS PROCEEDING?**

19 A. The purpose of my testimony is to sponsor the application filed by Alpine
20 Utilities, Inc. (“Alpine” or “the Company”) for an adjustment of certain rates and charges
21 for the provision of sewer services and provide an explanation of the Company's need for
22 rate relief.

1 **Q. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE COMPANY’S APPLICATION.**

2 A. In addition to the proposed rate schedule, the Application contains financial
3 statements consisting of a balance sheet, income statements, an asset and depreciation
4 schedule, revenue calculations under current rates and rates proposed in the application,
5 and a schedule of current and projected customers. Also included are the most recent
6 approval letters from DHEC and a sample customer bill form.

7
8 **Q. PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE RATE CHANGES AS PROPOSED IN THE**
9 **APPLICATION TO THE COMPANY’S SEWER RATE SCHEDULE.**

10 A. As reflected in its application and proposed rate schedule as amended, the
11 Company proposes to increase the full-service sewer charge from \$13.50 to \$28.00 per
12 month per residence or apartment unit. Additionally, Alpine is proposing to increase the
13 rates for its commercial classes of customers by a proportionate amount. The Company
14 has further requested that the Commission establish two additional classes of customers –
15 bowling alleys and bars or taverns. Currently, these customers are charged rates
16 calculated pursuant to the Company’s biochemical oxygen demand formula. The
17 proposed rates for these classifications have been increased in an amount commensurate
18 to the other rates.

19
20 **Q. MR. BURKETT, WERE THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS ATTACHED TO THE**
21 **APPLICATION PREPARED BY YOU OR UNDER YOUR DIRECTION?**

22 A. Yes. They are attached as Exhibit B to the application.

1 **Q. WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS?**

2 A. The test year chosen by the Company is the year ended December 31, 2007. This
3 was the most recent twelve-month period for which full data was available at the time of
4 the Company's filing in May, 2008. Schedule A is the Balance Sheet as of December 31,
5 2007. At the end of the test year, Alpine had assets of approximately \$221,556.

6 Schedule B is the Income Statement for the test year which shows that the
7 Company earned on a per book basis a (4.02%) operating margin (loss) and experienced
8 a net loss of (\$51,620). Additionally, the Company has experienced an increase in per
9 book operating expenses of almost \$700,000 since its last rate case over twenty (20)
10 years ago. This level of financial loss and increase in expenses demonstrates the
11 Company's need for rate relief.

12 Schedule C is the Asset and Depreciation Schedule for Alpine's plant in service.
13 Schedule D details the proposed revenues under present rates and the rates requested in
14 the application and also provides details as to the Company's commercial customers.
15 Schedule E provides information regarding the current and projected customers served by
16 Alpine.

17
18 **Q. WOULD YOU PLEASE PROVIDE A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE PRO**
19 **FORMA ADJUSTMENTS INCLUDED ON SCHEDULE B?**

20 A. Fuel and Power Purchased for Pumping were adjusted to reflect an estimated
21 annual increase of 5%. Materials and Supplies were adjusted to reflect an estimated
22 annual increase of 3%. Wastewater expenses were reduced by \$113,000 to reflect the

1 elimination of a sludge belt press which is being replaced with newer equipment.
2 Salaries and Wages and Employee Pension and Benefits were annualized to match end of
3 test year salaries and wages and were apportioned between Alpine and Woodland
4 Utilities, Inc. in accordance with Commission Order No. 2007-473. Depreciation was
5 adjusted to reflect pro forma additions to plant. Payroll Taxes have been adjusted for
6 changes in the payroll taxes based on current tax rates and annualized salary figures as
7 discussed above. In addition, the Regulatory Commission Tax was adjusted to an
8 estimated increase in the assessment by the PSC. Gross Receipts Taxes were annualized
9 on revenues under present and proposed rates. State and Federal Income taxes were
10 calculated at the current rates of 5% and 34%, respectively. Rate Case Expenses was
11 adjusted to reflect the cost of this proceeding amortized over a three-year period.
12 Adjustments were made to automotive expenses to identify non-utility use.
13 Miscellaneous Income has been adjusted to reflect an accounting adjustment during the
14 test year. Tap Fees collected during the test year were removed from the Company's
15 annual income. Net Utility Operating Income was further adjusted to recognize Interest
16 Expense incurred during the test year.

17
18 **Q. WHAT IS CONTAINED IN SCHEDULE C?**

19 A. Schedule C is the Company's Book Asset Detail demonstrating the Company's
20 assets and depreciation rates during the test year. As of December 31, 2007, the
21 Company had net assets of approximately \$1,320,973. After recognition of depreciation,
22 the Net Book Value of these assets is approximately \$153,724.

1 **Q. WHAT RATEMAKING METHODOLOGY DOES THE COMPANY PROPOSE**
2 **THAT THE COMMISSION EMPLOY IN THIS CASE?**

3 **A.** The Company proposes that its rates be determined utilizing operating margin
4 methodology.
5

6 **Q. MR. BURKETT, ARE YOU AWARE OF A SISTER COMPANY KNOWN AS**
7 **WOODLAND UTILITIES, INC.?**

8 **A.** Yes, I am. As with Alpine, I have advised Woodland Utilities, Inc. (“Woodland”)
9 with various financial issues for the past twenty-five years.
10

11 **Q. DO THE EXPENSES ALLOCATED BETWEEN ALPINE AND WOODLAND**
12 **CONSTITUTE AFFILIATE PAYMENTS?**

13 **A.** No, they would not because there are no payments involved, only expense
14 allocations. As the Commission knows from over thirty years of regulation of these
15 companies, Alpine and Woodland are operated as separate entities. In order to operate
16 more economically, these companies share certain resources, including office space and
17 personnel, in order to reduce the cost to their respective customers. The Commission has
18 historically allocated these expenses to the companies based upon customer units served.
19 As the Commission’s decisions through the years accepting this arrangement reflect –
20 most recently with Commission Order No 2007-473, dated August 8, 2007, in Docket
21 No. 2007-61-S with respect to a rate application filed by Woodland – this method of

1 allocation is cost efficient since it avoids duplication of these services and functions for
2 each operating entity.

3
4 **Q. WHAT IS THE PROPOSED RATE INCREASE DESIGNED TO ACCOMPLISH**
5 **FOR THE COMPANY?**

6 A. The proposed rate increase is designed to generate additional revenues that will
7 allow the Company to move closer to being on a sound financial footing, to allow it to
8 raise additional capital, and to increase its earnings to a more reasonable level through
9 fair charges to the consumer.

10
11 **Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY?**

12 A. Yes, it does.

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IN RE:


Application of Alpine Utilities, Inc.
for Adjustment of Rates and Charges
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and Charges.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

This is to certify that I have caused to be served this day one (1) copy of the **Direct Testimony of Robin Dial and Donald H. Burkett** via electronic mail and by placing same in the care and custody of the United States Postal Service with first class postage affixed thereto and addressed as follows:

Nanette S. Edwards, Esquire
Office of Regulatory Staff
Post Office Box 11263
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Richard L. Whitt, Jr., Esquire
Austin & Rogers, P.A.
Post Office Box 11716
Columbia, South Carolina 29201


Clark Fancher

Columbia, South Carolina
This 7th day of August, 2008.

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